

FRENCH INDO-CHINA

industry and 24 per cent in mines.¹ The government, tentatively in 1918 and seriously in 1927, stepped in to regulate conditions in the hiring and treatment of labourers with a minutia which the planters loudly deplored. The state's care of the Indo-Chinese worker is legally superior to that of France and other Far Eastern countries, even Japan, and is undeniably in advance of the social status of the workers. The government replies to its critics that such measures are only temporary and that free labour is expected to replace contract labour through the completion of the railway system. If there have been blunders in detail, which are natural enough when a foreign code is bodily transplanted, the government's measures have commendably anticipated the worst problems. The method may be artificial, but it has been effective, especially since the depression has eased the strain occasioned by a forced growth.

Among its provisions the state organized in 1930 a Conciliation Committee, and later auxiliary bureaux to settle labour disputes, and this arbitration has been successful in certain cases. The right to strike has been strictly confined to certain circumstances, and here enters the colonial factor, for there is fear not only of labour's instability, but of Communism as well. It is true that each year the number of strikes has dwindled. The first strike occurred in November, 1922, in Cholon after the wages of dyers had been reduced. From 1922 to 1925 there were twenty-five strikes, and a steady decline after the new 1927 legislation. Most of them show a certain confusion of political and economic motives. Trade unions, analogous to those of Japan and India, do not exist in the colony. The vast majority are still agricultural labourers with little

tendency to group themselves. The isolation from home and family which has been forced upon the worker is not intentional but is, nevertheless, significant in uprooting him from old ties, and in making him unstable and ripe for propagandists. This is particularly true of the women, who have been taken out of the home and absorbed into the factory system and urban living.

A Communist memorandum issued in 1928 by the Revolutionary Party stated that there were individual capitalists in Indo-China but no capitalistic class. Nor had the labourers developed any class consciousness. As yet they are too dispersed throughout the country: the biggest factory in Toijaa employs only 5,000 workers, and these are unskilled and imbrinked. A small native bourgeoisie exists but there

* Duménil, A., *La Formation des Casteaux Soudais en Pays Annamites* (Lyon, 1935)*